

January 31, 2013

**The Testimony of Stacey Zimmerman on behalf of the Service Employees  
International Union Connecticut State Council.**

1. S.B. No. 387 AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE. **Support**
2. H.B. No. 5713 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF LABOR HISTORY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM. **Support**
3. H.B. No. 5756 AN ACT REQUIRING THE STANDARD WAGE BE PAID TO CERTAIN EMPLOYEES OF EMPLOYERS WHO RECEIVED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENTITIES. **Support**

Good afternoon, Co-Chairs Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and the members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The Service Employees International Union Connecticut State Council represents over 65,000 active and retired members in Connecticut. SEIU is the state's largest union with both public and private sector members.

SEIU is in support of all three bills on the agenda today. The content of each will greatly improve the lives and understanding of working people. In an economy that has been all but decimated for those that punch a clock while corporate profits soar it is a pleasure to see the members of the Labor Committee put forth bills that will have a direct effect on constituents lives.

S.B. 387 AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE – is a bill that's time has come and we are pleased that the Legislature is taking another look at it after the failed attempt to pass it last year. No one who wakes up and goes to work should be paid a poverty wage especially in a state such as Connecticut with a remarkably high cost of living. The opponents of a wage hike will say now is not the time, in my years of being in and out of this building I have never once heard them say; boy we should really raise wages. Not during the boom years or the bust years has the corporate community once said we should raise the minimum wage because people should not live in poverty.

Mitt Romney's Job Creator Class have fought the minimum wage since it was first established and every increase since then. The time is now to act on the fight against poverty and modern day robber barons. Many will testify on stats and research of why the raising of the minimum wage is beneficial to the state, such as these wages are spent locally and studies show that a raise in the wage is good for the economy and these facts and figures will all be true but in the

end it is about fairness and a belief that Government not only has the right to enact a wage hike but an obligation to defend the ability of a worker to earn a fair days pay for a fair days work.

2. H.B. 5713 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF LABOR HISTORY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM. - The history of the Labor Movement is an integral yet often ignored part of the history of the United States; this bill would be a step in addressing the forgotten history of working people and the rise of the middle class.

As we approach the weekend it is important to remember that the weekend itself exemplifies the need to highlight the plight of working people in this country's history. Monday is the day most of us return to work after the weekend, a small but need respite from the toils of labor, but few know that these 48 hours were fought for by the American Labor Movement.

For a Nation that was founded in a Carpenter's Union Hall, the history that binds all who have had to work for a day's wage is sadly ignored. We forget that the 8 hour day, the minimum wage, safe working conditions and many other protections we take for granted were gained by struggle not handed out by a gracious boss or benign government. Thousands of people from all walks of life paid for these gains by imprisonment, bodily injury and death.

The students of Connecticut deserve to be taught the history of working Americans. Our ancestors may not be the generals and captains of industry they read about in the history books, but that by coming together in the workplace and the community working people can change this Nation.

H.B. 5756 AN ACT REQUIRING THE STANDARD WAGE BE PAID TO CERTAIN EMPLOYEES OF EMPLOYERS WHO RECEIVED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENTITIES.- It is understood that in this economic climate Connecticut must compete with other states and nations for jobs and that government has been put in position of a traveling salesman to recruit companies but we should not do so if we cannot guarantee that our values as a society will not fall by the wayside.

This bill is a work in progress and we look forward to working with the committee in the development of language that will insure that our hunt for jobs does not end up being a recruitment for low paying no benefit economic slavery positions. We have done this before in both case by case scenarios and through legislation but we have not created a system that ensures out tax money goes to employers that follow through on good job commitments. The race to the bottom is an easy race to win but not one that Connecticut should enter.